

CITY BUS

I sat down beside him and he smiled at me. Then, involuntarily nodding his head, he looked the other way. When his head rolled back around he asked me, "Do you like coffee?" I told him, "Yeh, sure I do." Then he said, "I like cream in my coffee. Do you?" "Cream? Yeah, cream is good," I told him. This conversation progressed along endless variations of this central theme. I saw him off and on for months. We just happened to catch the same bus most days. Sometimes he would be surrounded by these younger guys. They loved asking him questions. They'd do the usual coffee and cream routine. Eventually, they'd zero in with, "How about pussy? Do you like pussy?" "Oh you guys," he'd drawl like a little kid being teased. Grinning and looking down, his chin lolling on his chest, and his paper lunch sack bunched up in his hands between his knees.

SIMPLE BEAUTY

Standing in line at Donut Days before work. A black jag pulls up outside and a woman in a fur coat jumps out and comes in. "I'm sorry to break line but I'm double-parked and in a horrible hurry and I just cannot wait. I need six cups of coffee and a dozen glazed donuts." We all look at her. We all look at one another. None of us say anything. Outside the black jag sits in the rain, all gleam and gloss and another nitwit inside. When the clerk rings her up she throws a wad of bills across the counter at him. On her way out, pausing at the door, she addresses the construction worker standing there in his soaking wet army jacket. "Would you mind getting the door? My hands are full." To his dull glare of indifference she screams, "Is that too much to ask?!!" He takes one hand out of its wet pocket and places it on top of her tray, forcing all six cups of coffee and the dozen donuts through her grasp and onto the floor. Then he opens the door. She exits to hoots and howls, and just a smattering of applause.

— Daryl Rogers

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